

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 202519 TOSEC 100163

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PO
SUBJECT: PORTUGAL ROUND-UP AUGUST 25
FOR THE SECRETARY FROM LOWENSTEIN

1. TODAY IN LISBON NO NEWS WAS BAD NEWS. COSTA GOMES DID NOT BOW TO DEMANDS THAT HE FIRE GONCALVES, AND THE LATTER'S INSISTENCE THAT HE AT LEAST BE COMPENSATED WITH THE JOB OF ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF, UNDER WHOSE DIRECT COMMAND A NUMBER OF FIGHTING UNITS WERE PLACED OVER THE WEEKEND, REPORTEDLY ENJOYED THE SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT.

2. AS THE PALAVERING AND MANEUVERING CONTINUED DURING THE DAY, AND AS THE AUGUST 26 DEADLINE FOR CHANGING THE GOVERNMENT APPROACHED, IT BEGAN TO LOOK AS THOUGH THE MELO ANTUNES GROUP'S DRIVE AGAINST GONCALVES WAS BOGGING DOWN. AT THE VERY LEAST, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT MORE POLI-

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TICAL AND PERHAPS OTHER MUSCLE WOULD BE NEEDED TO OUST GONCALVES THAN THEY HAD ANTICIPATED. AS THEY TRIED TO BROADEN THEIR BASE WITHIN THE AFM AND AMONG THE MILITARY

UNITS, A NUMBER OF POWER PLAYS WERE LAUNCHED AGAINST THEM.

3. MOST IMPORTANT WAS A LATE-NIGHT MEETING INVOLVING GONCALVES, COSTA GOMES AND CARVALHO (WHO HAD BEEN RATHER WITHDRAWN OVER THE WEEKEND) AND THE "ACTIVE" MEMBERS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, I.E., EXCLUDING THE NINE MANIFESTO SIGNERS. AFTERWARDS IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT GENERAL

CORVACHO (PRO-GONCALVES) WOULD RESUME COMMAND OF THE NORTHERN MILITARY REGION ON AUGUST 27. ALTHOUGH CORVACHO'S WITHDRAWAL HAD BEEN DESCRIBED AS TEMPORARY, IT WAS EXPECTED THAT HIS GENERAL UNPOPULARITY IN THE NORTH WOULD PREVENT HIS RETURN. IF IT DOES TAKE PLACE, IT WOULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO USE THE MILITARY FORCES UNDER HIS COMMAND AGAINST LISBON, AND THAT IS PRESUMABLY THE REASON FOR HIS REINSTATEMENT.

4. IT ALSO WAS ANNOUNCED AFTER THE SAME MEETING THAT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL STAFF'S FIFTH DIVISION HAD BEEN SUSPENDED PENDING AN INQUIRY, THE REASONS FOR WHICH WERE NOT GIVEN, AND THAT THE AFM ASSEMBLY WOULD MEET SOON TO "RESTRUCTURE" THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE VERY-LEFT ASSEMBLY IS LIKELY TO BE CALLED UPON TO CONFIRM THE EXPULSION OF THE MANIFESTO SIGNERS FROM THE COUNCIL. NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT RESTRUCTURING THE GOVERNMENT.

5. ANOTHER PRO-COMMUNIST DEVELOPMENT DURING THE DAY WAS THE CREATION BY VARIOUS ULTRA-LEFT GROUPS, COMMUNISTS, SOME COPCON OFFICERS AND THE GENERAL STAFF'S FIFTH DIVISION OF A "PROVISIONAL SECRETARIAT TO COORDINATE A COMMON OFFENSE AGAINST REACTION". LOOKING MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN IT MAY TURN OUT TO BE, THIS DEVICE FOR "LEFT UNITY" WILL NEVERTHELESS WEIGH IN GONCALVES' FAVOR.

6. ONE BRIGHT SPOT WAS THE APPEARANCE IN LISBON OF THE NEW SOCIALIST ORGAN, "A LUTA", AS A "SOCIALIST, PLURALIST AND INDEPENDENT" NEWSPAPER DEDICATED TO FIGHTING TYRANNY
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IN ALL ITS FORMS.

7. BY THE TIME THE DAY'S EVENTS ENDED THERE WAS A GROWING IMPRESSION THAT, SO FAR AT LEAST, THE "MODERATES" HAD FAILED TO PULL IT OFF AND THAT GONCALVES HAD SUCCEEDED IN DIGGING HIMSELF IN FURTHER. CORVACHO'S RETURN TO THE NORTH AND THE MOVE AGAINST THE "MODERATES" IN THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL ARE DEPRIVING MELO ANTUNES AND HIS SUPPORTERS OF THEIR OPTIONS. THEY SOON WILL BE LIMITED TO TWO: RETREAT OR ATTACK -- AND IF THE LATTER, THE

CHOICE MAY BE A COUP IN LISBON OR A MARCH ON THE CAPITAL
FROM THE NORTH. INGERSOLL

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